

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

CHAPTER LVIII. DANGER.

SIR HARRY took his coffee with us, and read to me a little now and then from the papers which had come by the late mails. Mr. Blount had farming news to tell Richard. It was a dreadful tea-party.

I was only able that night to appoint with Richard to meet me, next day, at our accustomed trysting place.

Three o'clock was our hour of meeting. The stupid, feverish day dragged on, and the time at length arrived. I got on my things quickly, and trembling lest I should be joined by Sir Harry or Mr. Blount, I betook myself through the orchard, and by the wicket in the hedge, to the lonely path through the thick woods where we had a few months since plighted our troth.

Richard appeared very soon; he was approaching by the path opposite to that by which I had come.

The foliage was thick and the boughs hang low in that place. You could have fancied him a figure walking in the narrow passage of a monastery, so dark and well-defined is the natural roofing of the path-way there. He raised his open hand, and shook his head as he drew near; he was not smiling; he looked very sombre.

He glanced back over his shoulder, and looked sharply down the path I had come by, and being now very near me, with another gloomy shake of the head, he said, with a tone and look of indescribable reproach and sorrow: "So, Ethel has her secrets, and tells me but half her mind."

"What can you mean, Richard?"

"Ah! Ethel, I would not have treated you so," he continued.

"You distract me, Richard; what have I done?"

"I have heard it all by accident, I may say, from old Mr. Blount, who has been simpleton enough to tell me. You have asked my uncle to take you to London, and you are going."

"Asked him! I have all but implored of him to leave me here. I never heard a word of it till last night, as we returned together in the boat. Oh! Richard, how could you think such things? That is the very thing I have been so longing to talk to you about."

"Ethel, darling, are you opening your heart entirely to me, now; is there no reserve? No; I am sure there is not; you need not answer."

"It is distracting news; is there nothing we can do to prevent it?" I said.

He looked miserable enough, as walking slowly along the path, and sometimes standing still, we talked it over.

"Yes," he said; "the danger is that you may lead him by resistance to look for some secret motive. If he should suspect our engagement, few worse misfortunes could befall us. Good heavens! shall I ever have a quiet home? Ethel, I know what will happen; you will go to London; I shall be forgotten. It will end in the ruin of all my hopes." So he raved on.

I wept, and upbraided, and vowed my old vows over again.

At length after this tempestuous scene had gone on for some time, we two walking side by side up and down the path, and sometimes stopping short, I crying, if you will, like a fool, he took my hand and looked in my face very sadly, and he said after a little:

"Only I know that he would show more anger, I should have thought that my uncle

knew of our engagement, and was acting expressly to frustrate it. He has found work for me at his property near Hull, and from that I am to go to Warwickshire, so that I suppose I can't be here again before the middle of October, and long before then you will be at Brighton, where, Mr. Blount says, he means to take you first, and from that to London."

"But you are not to leave this immediately?" I said.

He smiled bitterly, and answered:

"He takes good care I shall. I am to leave this to-morrow morning."

I could not speak for a moment.

"Oh, Richard, Richard, how am I to live through this separation?" I cried wildly. "You must contrive some way to see me. I shall die unless you do."

"Come, Ethel, let us think it over; it seems to me, we have nothing for it for the present but submission. I am perfectly certain that our attachment is not suspected. If it were, far more cruel and effectual measures would be taken. We must, therefore, be cautious. Let us betray nothing of our feelings. You shall see me undergo the ordeal with the appearance of carelessness and even cheerfulness, although my heart be bursting. You, darling, must do the same; one way or other I will manage to see you sometimes, and to correspond regularly. We are bound each to the other by promises we dare not break, and when I desert you, may God desert me! Ethel, will you say the same?"

"Yes, Richard," I repeated, vehemently, through sobs, "when I forsake you may God forsake me! You know I could not live without you. Oh! Richard, darling, how shall I see you all this evening, knowing it to be the last? How can I look at you, or hear your voice, and yet no sign, and talk or listen just as usual as if nothing had gone wrong? Richard, is there no way to escape? Do you think if we told your uncle? Might it not be the best thing after all? Could it possibly make matters worse?"

"Yes it would, a great deal worse; that is not to be thought of," said Richard, with a thoughtful frown; "I know him better than you do. No; we have nothing for it but patience, and entire trust in one another. As for me, if I am away from you, the more solitary I am, the more bearable my lot. With you it will be different; you will soon be in the stream and whirl of your old life. I shall lose you, Ethel." He stamped on the ground, and struck his

forehead with his open hand in sheer distraction. "As for me, I can enjoy nothing without you; I may have been violent, wicked, reckless, what you will; but selfish or fickle, no one ever called me."

I was interrupting him all the time with my passionate vows of fidelity, which he seemed hardly to hear; he was absorbed in his own thoughts. After a silence of a minute or two, he said, suddenly:

"Look here, Ethel; if you don't like your London life, you can't be as well there as here, and you can, if you will, satisfy my uncle that you are better, as well as happier, here at Golden Friars. You can do that, and that is the way to end it—the only way to end it, that I see. You can write to me, Ethel, without danger. You will, I know, every day, just a line; and when you tell me how to address mine, you shall have an answer by every post. Don't go out in London, Ethel; you must promise that."

I did, vehemently and reproachfully. I wondered how he could suspect me of wishing to go out. But I could not resent the jealousy that proved his love.

It was, I think, just at this moment that I heard a sound that made my heart bound within me, and then sink with terror. It was the clear, deep voice of Sir Harry, so near that it seemed a step must bring him round the turn in the path, and full in view of us.

"Go, darling, quickly," said Richard, pressing me gently with one hand, and with the other pointing in the direction furthest from the voice that was so near a signal of danger. He himself turned, and walked quickly to meet Sir Harry, who was conferring with his ranger about thinning the timber.

I was out of sight in a moment, and, in agitation indescribable, made my way home.

CHAPTER LIX. AN INTRUDER.

It was all true. Richard left Dorracleugh early next morning. Those who have experienced such a separation know its bitterness, and the heartache and apathy that follow.

I was going to be left quite alone, and mistress of Dorracleugh for three weeks at least; perhaps for twice as long. Mr. Blount was to leave next day for France to pay a visit of a fortnight to Vichy. Sir Harry Rokestone, a few days later, was to leave Dorracleugh for Brighton.

Nothing could be kinder than Sir Harry. It was plain that he suspected nothing of the real situation.

"You'll be missing your hit of back-

gammon with Lemuel Blount," he said, "and your sail on the mere wi' myself, and our talk round the tea-table of an evening. 'Twill be dowl'd down here, lass; but ye'll be coming soon where you'll see sights and hear noise enough for a dozen. So think o' that, and when we are gone you munnon be glumpin' about the house, but chirp up, and think there are but a few weeks between you and Brighton and Lunnon."

How directly this kind of consolation went to the source of my dejection you may suppose.

So the time came, and I was alone. Solitude was a relief. I could sit looking at the lake, watching the track where his boat used to come and go over the water, and thinking of him half the day. I could walk in the pathway, and sit under the old beech-tree, and murmur long talks with him in fancy, without fear of interruption; but oh! the misgivings, the suspense, the dull, endless pain of separation!

Not a line reached me from Richard. He insisted that while I remained at Dorracleugh there should be no correspondence. In Golden Friars, and about the post-office, there were so many acute ears and curious eyes.

Sir Harry had been gone about three weeks, when he sent me a really exquisite little enamelled watch, set in brilliants; it was brought to Dorracleugh by a Golden Friars neighbour whom he had met in his travels. Then, after a silence of a week, another letter came from Sir Harry. He was going up to London, he said, to see after the house, and to be sure that nothing was wanting to "make it smart."

Then some more days of silence followed, interrupted very oddly.

I was out, taking my lonely walk in the afternoon, when a chaise with a port-manteau, a hat-box, and some other luggage on top, drove up to the hall-door; the driver knocked and rang, and out jumped Richard Marston, who ran up the steps, and asked the servant, with an accustomed air of command, to take his luggage up to his room.

He had been some minutes in the hall before he inquired whether I was in the house.

He sat down on a hall-chair, in his hat and great-coat, just as he had come out of the chaise, lost in deep thought.

He seemed for a time undecided where to go; he went to the foot of the stairs, and stopped short, with his hand on the banister, and turned back; then he stood for a little while in the middle of the hall, looking down on his dusty boots, again in

deep thought; then he walked to the hall-door, and stood on the steps, in the same undecided state, and sauntered in again, and said to the servant:

"And Miss Ware, you say, is out walking? Well, go you and tell the housekeeper that I have come, and shall be coming and going for a few days, till I hear from London."

The man departed to execute his message. Richard Marston had paid the vicar a visit of about five minutes, as he drove through the town of Golden Friars, and had had a very private and earnest talk with him.

He seemed very uncomfortable and fidgety. He took off his hat and laid it down, and put it on again, and looked dark and agitated, like a man in sudden danger, who expects a struggle for his life.

He went again to the foot of the stairs, and listened for a few seconds; and then, without more ado, he walked over and turned the key that was in Sir Harry's study-door, took it out, and went into the room, looking very stern and nervous.

In a little more than five minutes Mrs. Shackleton, the housekeeper, in her thick brown silk, knocked sharply at the door.

"Come in," called Richard Marston's voice.

"I can't, sir."

"Can't? Why? What's the matter?"

"You've bolted it, please, on the inside," she answered, very tartly.

"I? I haven't bolted it," Richard Marston answered, with a quiet laugh. "Try again."

She did, a little fiercely; but the door opened, and disclosed Richard Marston sitting in his uncle's easy-chair, with one of the newspapers he had bought in his railway carriage expanded on his knees.

He looked up carelessly.

"Well, Mrs. Shackleton, what's the row?"

"No row, sir, please," she answered, as sharply rustling into the room, and looking round. She didn't like him. "But the door was bolted, I assure you, sir, only a minute before, when I tried it first; and my master, Sir Harry, told me no one was to be allowed into this room while he's away."

"So I should have thought; his letters lying about; but I found the door open, and the key in the lock; here it is; so I thought it safer to take it out."

The old woman made a short curtsy as she took it, dryly, from his fingers; and she stood, resolutely waiting.

"Oh! I suppose," he said, starting up, and stretching himself, with a smile and a little yawn, "you want to turn me out?"

"Yes, sir, please," said Mrs. Shackleton, peremptorily.

The young gentleman cast a careless look through the far window, and looked lazily round, as if to see that he had not forgotten anything, and then said, with a smile:

"Mrs. Shackleton, happy the man who has such a lady to take care of his worldly goods."

"I'm no lady, sir; I'm not above my business," she said, with another hard little curtsy. "I tries to do my dooty accordin' to my conscience. Sorry to have to disturb you, sir."

"Not the least; no disturbance," he said, sauntering out of the room, with another yawn.

He was cudgelling his brain to think what civility he could do the old lady, or how he could please or make her friendly; but Mrs. Shackleton had her northern pride, he knew, which was easily ruffled, and he must approach her very cautiously.

CHAPTER LX. SIR HARRY'S KEY.

UP to his room he went; his things were all there; he wished to get rid of the dust and smuts of his railway journey.

He made his toilet rapidly; and just as he was about to open his door a knock came to it.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The vicar has called, sir, and wants to know if you can see him."

"Certainly. Tell him I'll go down in a moment."

Mr. Marston had foreseen this pursuit with a prescience of which he was proud. He went down-stairs, and found the white-haired vicar alone in the drawing-room.

"I am so delighted you have come," said Richard Marston, advancing quickly, with an outstretched hand, from the door, without giving him a moment to begin. "I have only had time to dress since I arrived, and I have made up my mind that it is better to replace this key in your hand, without using it; and, in the mean time, it is better in your keeping than in mine. Don't you think so?"

"Well, sir," said the good vicar, "I do. It is odd, but the very same train of thought passed through my mind, and, in fact, induced me to pay you this visit. You see it was placed in my charge, and I think until it is formally required of me, I should not part with it."

"Just so," acquiesced the young man.

"We both acted, perhaps, a little too precipitately."

"So we did, sir," said Richard Marston, "but I take the entire blame on myself. I'm too apt to be impulsive and foolish. I generally think too late; happily this time, however, I did reflect, and with your concurrence, I am now sure I was right."

The young man paused and thought, with his hand on the vicar's arm.

"One thing," he said, "I would stipulate, however; as we are a good deal in the dark, my reason for declining to take charge of the key would be but half answered, as I must be a great deal in this house, and there may be other keys that open it, and I can't possibly answer for servants, and other people who will be coming and going, unless you will kindly come into the next room with me for a moment."

The vicar consented; Mr. Marston was eloquent. Mrs. Shackleton was sent for, and with less reluctance opened the door for the vicar, whom she loved. She did not leave it, however—they did not stay long. In a few minutes the party withdrew.

"Won't you have some luncheon?" asked Richard, in the hall.

"No, thank you," said the vicar, "I am very much hurried. I am going to see that poor boy to whom Mr. Blount has been so kind, and who is, I fear, dying."

And with a few words more, and the key again in his keeping, he took his leave.

I was all this time in my favourite haunt, alone, little thinking that the hero of my dreams was near, when suddenly I saw him walking rapidly up the path.

With a cry, I ran to meet him. He seemed delighted and radiant with love as he drew me to him, folded me for a moment in his arms, and kissed me passionately.

He had ever so much to say; and yet, when I thought it over, there was nothing in it but one delightful promise; and that was that, henceforward, he expected to see a great deal more of me than he had hitherto done.

There was a change in his manner, I thought; he spoke with something of the confidence and decision of a lover who had a right to command.

He was not more earnest, but more demonstrative; I might have resented his passionate greeting, if I had been myself less surprised and happy at his sudden appearance. He was obliged to go down to the village, but would be back again, he said, very soon. It would not do to make

people talk, which they would be sure to do, if he and I were not very cautious.

Therefore I let him go, without entreaty or remonstrance, although it cost me an indescribable pang to lose him, even for an hour, so soon after our long separation.

He promised to be back in an hour, and although that was nearly impracticable, I believed him. Lovers "trample upon impossibilities."

By a different route I came home. He had said :

"When I return, I shall come straight to the drawing-room ; will you be there ?"

So to the drawing-room I went. I was afraid to leave it even for a moment, lest some accident should make him turn back, and he should find the room empty. There was to me a pleasure in obeying him, and I liked him to see it.

How I longed for his return ! How restless I was ! How often I played his favourite airs on the piano ; how often I sat at the window, looking down at the trees and the mere, in the direction from which I had so often seen his boat coming, you will easily guess.

All this time I had a secret misgiving. There was a change in Richard's manner, as I have said ; there was confidence, security, carelessness—a kind of carelessness—not that he seemed to admire me less—but it was a change. There seemed something ominous about it.

As time wore on I became so restless that I could hardly remain quiet for a minute in any one place. I was perpetually holding the door open, and listening for the sounds of horses' hoofs, or wheels, or footsteps. In vain.

An hour beyond the appointed time had passed ; two hours. I was beginning to fancy all sorts of horrors. Was he drowned in the mere ? Had his horse fallen and killed him ? There was no catastrophe too improbable to be canvassed among the wild conjectures of my terror.

The sun was low, and I almost despairing, when the door opened, and Richard came in.

I had heard no sound at the door, no step approaching, only he was there.

FAIR PLAY FOR THE BIRDS.

AN Act of Parliament is a great and mighty thing. We have all to bow down and reverence it, or at all events to obey it. If we offend against any of its enactments, great or small, and plead that we never heard of them, the plea is held in-

valid by judge, jury, magistrate, and policeman. We are told that our ignorance is no excuse, and that it is our duty to know the law, and conform to it, under all the usual penalties of fine or imprisonment, or both together. But if we know the law and can't understand it ? What then ? The reply is that that is our business, and not the business of the law or the law-maker, and that we are punishable for our want of comprehension. And if the law is a farce, a humbug, a jumble, a muddle, a contradiction, and an absurdity, what then ? Ay, there's the rub ! If we are a member of parliament or a minister we must do our duty to the best of our ability, and endeavour to get the law repealed or amended ; or if we are a thousand, or ten thousand, or a million of people who are aggrieved by it, and will work together on the platform, in the press, and in parliament, we may if we are thoroughly in earnest, and in the course of a generation or so, get the law altered and reduced into the formulas of common sense. If we can do none of these things, we must make the best of a bad bargain, or as the Americans say, "grin and bear it."

Some time during the session of 1872, and possibly in a thin house, after midnight, when the few members present were drowsy, weary, and inattentive, an Act was passed for the protection of some of the wild birds of the British Isles. The Act came into operation on the 15th of March, 1873, and is technically known as the Act of the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth of Victoria, chapter seventy-eight. It is a very short Act, and declares that "Whereas it is expedient to provide for the protection of certain wild birds of the United Kingdom during the breeding season, from the 15th of March to the 1st of August every year, any person who shall knowingly or with intent kill, wound, or take, or expose or offer for sale any of the wild birds enumerated in the schedule shall, on conviction before a magistrate, be liable to a fine not exceeding five shillings and costs." Any by-passer who may happen to witness the perpetration of an offence of the kind is empowered to ask the name and address of the offender, in order to inform against him ; and if the offender refuse to give name and address, or give false ones, he will incur another liability to a fine of ten shillings and costs, and may be imprisoned till the fine be paid. It will be seen that the provisions of the Act apply not only to those who kill, with the gun or otherwise, but to those who entrap or snare, or "take"

wild birds. All this seems exceedingly fair and just to the poor wild birds, and no doubt appeared to be so to the sleepy legislators by whose instrumentality the Bill of 1872 became law. But the apparent fairness disappears on examination, and the Act reveals itself, either as a well-meant but inefficient piece of sentimentalism, or a cunning scheme for the better preservation of pheasants, partridges, and grouse by means of the destruction of all the birds of prey that inhabit our islands. The Act declares that the words "wild birds shall, for all its purposes, be deemed to include the birds specified in the schedule." The schedule occupies but one page of the Act, and contains the names of no more than seventy-nine birds, some of them birds of passage, which only favour us during the spring and summer, and others which remain with us all the year round. The list, which is a curiosity both for what it contains and for what it omits, is as follows:

Avocet	Redstart
Bittern	Robin redbreast
Blackcap	Ruff and roove
Chiff-chaff	Sanderling
Coot	Sandgrouse
Creepor	Sandpiper
Crossbill	Sealark
Cuckoo	Shoveller
Curlew	Siskin
Dotterel	Snipe
Dunbird	Spoonbill
Dunlin	Stint
Flycatcher	Stone curlew
Godwit	Stonechat
Golden-crested wren	Stonechat
Goldfinch	Summer snipe
Greenshank	Swallow
Hawfinch or grossbeak	Swan
Hedge-sparrow	Swift
Kingfisher	Teal
Landrail	Thicknee
Lapwing	Titmouse (longtail)
Mallard	Titmouse (bearded)
Martin	Wagtail
Moorhen	Warbler (Dartford)
Nightingale	Warbler (reed)
Nightjar	Warbler (sedge)
Nuthatch	Whaup
Owl	Wheatear
Oxbird	Whinchat
Pewit	Whimbrel
Phalacrope	Widgeon
Pipit	Woodcock
Plover	Wild duck
Ploverspage	Woodlark
Pochard	Woodpecker
Purre	Woodwren
Quail	Wren
Redpole	Wryneck
Redshank	

The author of this schedule seems not to have been a scientific ornithologist, or he would not have enumerated the plover, the lapwing, the pewit, and the whaup, as four distinct birds, seeing that they are but four names for one creature, two of the names being English, and two of them Scotch or

Northumbrian. The list of seventy-nine is thus reduced to seventy-six. There is only one bird of prey, the owl, which the framers of the Act have thought it worth while to protect, a favour which is somewhat incomprehensible, when it is considered that other carnivorous birds have quite as many claims on our compassion as the owl, and that many of them are far more beautiful. Not that the owl ought not to be taken under the care of the legislature, but that if he is, for good and sufficient reasons, to be protected during a season, the hawk and the falcon, who are quite as useful as he in the economy of nature, ought to share the privilege.

As far as it goes the Act is right. But it does not go far enough; and if right partially might have been made right entirely. Granted the right of these seventy-six birds enumerated in the schedule, to live and propagate their kind—subject to the superior right of man, to use them for his benefit, without annihilating the species—why should not the wisacres who framed the Act have admitted the right of other birds, all as beautiful and useful as them, to the same forbearance? If the hedge-sparrow is to be protected from the gun and the trap—from the 15th of March to the 1st of August—why not the house-sparrow? If the nightingale, the poet of the evening, is to find favour in the eyes of the British legislature, why not the beautiful skylark, the poet of the morning, singing, as Shakespeare says, "at heaven's gate," and pouring out its delicious anthems of joy and gratitude, far away up in the blue sky? And if it is to be a finable offence to kill or capture a cuckoo, why should not the thrush and the blackbird—the merle and the mavis of old times—be as tenderly dealt with? Indeed, it may be asked why they should not be more tenderly dealt with, and more carefully protected, considering not only their beauty, and their song, but the great services which they render to the farmer and the gardener, by their depredations on the too prolific insect life of the summer. The cuckoo is of no particular use in the economy of nature; he is a lazy or an unskilful bird, that cannot build his own nest, like his superiors, whose houses and lodgings he wrongfully misappropriates, and is at the best what Wordsworth calls him, a "wandering voice," very pleasant to hear to those who are weary of the winter and look forward with hopeful anticipation to the summer. But the thrush and the blackbird sing infinitely better, have more than two notes in their

voices, and are honester and more useful birds, yet their names do not appear in the schedule. Anybody licensed to carry a gun may kill or wound them, anybody unlicensed to carry a gun may "take" or snare them. Again, it is an offence against this particular Act to kill, wound, or take that pretty little songster, the goldfinch, during eighteen weeks of the year, but it is no offence to kill, wound, or take a linnnet, a songster which many prefer, and which certainly merits, in as high a degree as the goldfinch, the kindly regard of every lover of nature. Running over the list of the favoured birds, and recalling only from memory, and without the aid of Buffon, Yarrell, Wood, or any other ornithological writer, I find among the unfavoured birds, or those not included in the operations of the Act, all the varieties of the sparrow tribe (the hedge-sparrow excepted), of which there are sixty-seven: the hawk, the sparrow-hawk, the falcon, the starling, the magpie, the rook, the chough, the crow, the raven, the jackdaw, the jay, the chaffinch, the bullfinch, the greenfinch, the fieldfare, the yorling, or yellow-hammer, the bunting (and all its varieties), the dove or pigeon (and all its varieties), the heron, the butcher-bird (the shrike), and the eagle. This list is independent of the sea birds, for the protection of which, in certain seasons, a separate Act was passed in a previous session. Upon what principle, or upon what classification, all these birds have been outlawed by the framers of the Act of 1872, it is difficult to imagine. Why, for instance, are the owls and the owl tribe to be protected, when the noble eagle in all its varieties is left to the slaughterman, who may or who may not be or call himself a sportsman?

Possibly the Act is not such a stupid mistake as it appears at first glance to be, but a device, under the cloak of a seeming humanity, to throw dust in the sleepy eyes of the public, and conduce to the better preservation of game. All the carnivorous birds of the British Isles, with the sole exception of the owl, as already mentioned, are to be left to the mercy of the unmerciful. The hawk and the falcon—in which our ancestors took such wholesome, jovial, out-of-door pleasure, and which sat on the wrists of noble knights and lovely ladies in the days when nobles were not traders, and did not send their poultry to market—are considered to be vermin by the gamekeepers, and the gamekeepers' masters of our day, and are destroyed accordingly, with a ruthlessness which is rendered more

ruthless by the mercenary greed of the shop. I must own that when I pass a barn door or outhouse in the country, in a gentleman's park, and see the rotting skeletons of hawks, falcons, owls, and butcher-birds, intermingled with those of stoats, weasels, ferrets, and other animals, suspected of stealing the eggs of game, stuck up against the wall, as if to warn all such predatory creatures of the dangers that they incur in making war against the sacred birds of the English landowners, I feel as if I should like to stick up a gamekeeper beside them to keep them company.

Mr. Waterton, the late eminent naturalist, would not allow any wild birds to be destroyed on his estate. The birds of prey were as much the objects of his care and regard as the gentler birds that filled the woodlands with their music; and he determined, as far as in him lay, not to disturb the balance of nature by making war upon any bird whatsoever, believing, as we all should believe, that man has no right to deprive his humbler fellow-creatures of the life that God has given them, unless it be for food, or unless the creature be noxious or dangerous to humanity, like the wolf, the tiger, or the venomous reptile. The consequence was that the noxious and undue increase of small birds, consumers of grain and fruit, and destroyers of orchards and gardens, like the sparrow and finch tribes, and those insatiable gluttons, the wood-pigeons, was prevented by the natural agencies of the birds of prey. The legislature ought to imitate Mr. Waterton's policy in this respect, and protect all the wild birds of the British Isles, without any exception whatever, during the period of breeding and incubation. This would be a wise measure, and fair play to the birds. The Act of 1872 is an injustice and an absurdity, and is pervaded by no principle of equity. It protects many useless birds—the hedge-sparrow, for instance—and, as we have seen, grants no protection to such universal favourites as the lark, the thrush, and the blackbird. It protects the widgeon, but allows the pigeon to be dealt with as seems good to cockney sportsmen and other bird destroyers. It goes out of its way to protect the robin redbreast, a bird which the vilest boor and wickedest urchin of any parish in England would not think of killing. But the Act has not a word to say for the yellow-hammer or yellow yorling, which the same boys, who respect and spare the robin for the sake of an old song, persecute unrelentingly, on the

strength of another piece of verse, which libels the poor bird for the sake of the rhyme, and calls it "Yellow, yellow yorling, you are the devil's darling." But the inconsistencies of the Act are beyond enumeration, and can only be remedied by an amended Act, protecting all birds, whether graminivorous, or carnivorous, or omnivorous, during the breeding period.

Another defect in the law is that it enacts no penalties against bird's-nesting. If the object of the Act is to preserve some (it ought to try to preserve all) of the wild birds of these islands, it ought to have protected the eggs as well as the parent birds during the season of maternity.

Fair play for birds of all kinds, that is what is wanted. It is not given by the Act of 1872, which might be easily amended by the simple omission of the schedule, and the substitution of the words "all of the wild birds," instead of "some of the wild birds," in the body of the Act. Will no member of parliament undertake the task?

FROM SEVASTOPOL TO BALAKLAVA.

"Now for Balaklava!" cries my companion, starting up from a heterogeneous breakfast of cabbage-soup, dried fish, veal-cutlets, water-melon, grapes, and café au lait, and assuming the peculiarly dogged expression of the British martyr when about to be cast into the arena of sight-seeing.

"Done with you!" respond I; "and, now I think of it, we'll take our friend Vasili (that soldier we were talking to last night, you know) to do a bit of guide-book for us."

Vasili—a stalwart Russian grenadier, with the scars of Balaklava still legible on his weather-beaten visage—is ready enough to enlist, with the prospect of a bottle of vodka as his honorarium; and, half an hour later, we were trudging manfully up the main street of Sevastopol, under the glorious sunshine of a real autumn day in the Crimea.

Certainly there is no season like October for a visit to the coast of the Black Sea; and the celebrated invalid who, on learning that the old style is still retained in Russia, went thither that he might have twelve days longer to live, might well have plumed himself upon the success of his experiment, had he landed where we are now. Behind us, like the phantoms of a troubled dream, lie cold winds and drifting snows,

fur wrappers and double windows; around us are bright sunshine and cloudless skies, butterflies hovering enjoyingly on the warm, voluptuous air, and ruddy peasants in shirt-sleeves, proffering us huge clusters of ripe grapes. For us, at least, from Russia to Italy there is but one step.

And so we march onward, past the crumbling ruins of the redoubtable Flagstaff Battery, along the lip of the Vorontzoff ravine; upward over the wide sweep of bare upland, scarred by trenches and embankments which have an ugly significance to a military eye; till, about midway across the great plateau, we halt to take breath and look about us.

"They've got the round tower up again on the Malakoff Hill, you see," I remark, pointing to a white patch on the green outline of the furthest ridge. "Not that it matters much, for, with our present artillery, they'd have to fortify the whole plateau instead of only the town; and besides, the place is going to be a trading port now."

"Fancy Sevastopol a trading port! However, they seem to be going ahead with the clearing of that space for the great quay, along the southern harbour yonder; but where's this canal to be that you were talking of?"

"Up from the Balaklava basin; it's to be the military harbour now, you know—along the valley of the Tchernaya, and round to the head of the great harbour. It's to cost fourteen million roubles (nearly two million pounds). Then the railway—there's the cutting yonder, that grey streak away to the northward. They're working the three tunnels between this and the Belbek from both ends at once; and they count upon having the line open as far as Simferopol by the end of 1873. See, there's the farm-house where Lord Raglan died. Come and have a look at it."

As we descend towards Balaklava, the little wicker-work hovels of the Tartar herdsmen begin to dot the slopes on either side; and their fallow, beardless, pudding-faced occupants stare at us with a wide-eyed wonder which proves that (at this season at least) foreign intruders are a rarity. Only one of the number remains utterly unmoved—a fine-looking old man, who is seated on a sheepskin at the door of his hut, with stern bronzed features, which look doubly grim in their frame of snow-white hair. He replies courteously to our salutations, but without losing for a moment the stately impassibility which is the birthright of Oriental races. It is a

strange contrast! On one side railways, and steamers, and telegraphs, and all the appliances of civilisation; on the other the last representative of the ancient barbarism, unchanged since the days when his forefathers swept all Russia as with a whirlwind, six hundred years ago. One can hardly conceive a stranger or a more touching spectacle than this grand, lonely, irreclaimable old savage, lingering in the midst of a world which has long outgrown and forgotten him.

Keeping steadily eastward, we debouch at length upon a great semicircle of smooth green hillside, in front of which, at some little distance, lies a round knoll, and beyond it a wide, level valley, flanked by low hills. The knoll is that once occupied by the Turkish redoubt which Liprandi stormed at the opening of the battle; the open space beyond is the scene of the Light Cavalry charge.

"What a handful they must have looked, dashing up that pass!" says my companion. "They may well say it was the finest thing ever done."

"Ay, that's the place!" strikes in Vasil, guessing by the direction of our eyes what we are talking about. "They came upon us as if they were sure of us already; and we—although there were enough of us to swallow 'em whole—we were so taken aback by their daring, that we fairly ran, there's no denying it! It was in trying to save one of our guns that I got this" (pointing to a fearful scar across his left cheek and temple). "However, they were brave fellows, and I bear 'em no grudge; 'he who remembers bygones, out with his eye!'"

A few minutes later, we stand upon the edge of a smooth land-locked basin, overshadowed by huge walls of rock, along the base of which runs the straggling line of little particoloured dog-kennels which represents the "town of Balaklava." The whole place, harbour and all, looks exactly as though it had strayed into this cul-de-sac long ago and had never been able to find its way out again; and it is sufficiently comical to read upon the front of one little whitewashed hovel, bigger by a single room than the rest of its congeners, a huge inscription, running literally as follows:

THE AMERICAN HOTEL.

The Logins for the English Captains.

As up the Stars.

"I've heard of the old moons being chopped up into stars, but never of the stars being

similarly hashed," remarks my comrade; and not without considerable thought do we at length resolve this hieroglyphic into "Ask up-stairs." Certainly Balaklava now bears little token of having once been a central point in one of the greatest sieges on record; but the ruins of the old Genoese castle, standing gauntly up against the sky from the crest of the overhanging ridge, show that the value of the position was fully appreciated by the best soldiers of the Middle Ages. Of course we are bound to climb up and inspect them; but the ascent, even for personal friends of Mont Blanc and the Great Pyramid, is anything but an easy matter. Not without considerable damage to our clothes, and a sevenfold heating of our already furnace-like faces, do we at length reach the top, where the glorious seaward view amply repays our exertions. The "inhospitable Pontus" is in one of his most genial moods; and the dancing ripples of the blue sea, the magnificent coast-line extending to right and left as far as the eye can reach, the rich southern sky overhanging all, blot out for the moment all memory of the great catastrophe.

But when I turn my face landward, all is changed in a moment. Over the whole landscape, from Balaklava harbour to the head of the Inkermann valley, broods that nameless something which marks the man who has suffered beyond the measure of his fellows, or the soil which has been blasted by some great historical tragedy. In all my travels I have seen no grander or gloomier spectacle than the scene of that great carnival of death in its grim, utter desolation. Ruins everywhere—the ruins of the Russian Sevastopol, the Tartar Inkermann, the Genoese Balaklava, the Greek Chersonesus. Streets without an inhabitant, walls hacked through and through by cannon-balls, huge barracks gaping shell-like over heaps of ruin, and vast batteries crumbling into shapeless mounds of dust. Still, along the great plateau, one may see the lines of approach that once crept up, foot by foot, to the borders of the doomed city; still bristles along the crest of the Malakoff the formless ridge of earth which five thousand Frenchmen died to win; over the valley of Balaklava one can trace, as upon a map, the fatal charge of the Six Hundred; on the heights of Inkermann the caverns are still peopled with peasant families, as in the days of the great struggle; but the life, and the beauty, and the glory of Sevastopol are gone for evermore.

Three hours later, in the silence of the autumn sunset, I climb the hill of the Redan; and, looking round upon it, feel once more—as I have felt at the first sight of Moscow, or Lisbon, or the Court of the Mamelukes at Cairo, or the Et-Meidaun-square in Constantinople—how hard it is, even upon the very scene of a great historical tragedy, to realise the grim story of its past. Few can now picture to themselves the solid towers of the Kremlin melting in a whirlpool of lapping flames, or the dainty white streets and terraced gardens of Lisbon surging with the heave of the great earthquake, or the stately Turkish square and the solemn Egyptian citadel roaring with the clamour and hurly-burly of the two bloodiest massacres on record. And here, too, on this great battle-field of five nations, little trace remains of the evil past. The terrible Redan has crumbled into a shapeless heap of sandy earth; and the lambs frolic over the smooth green turf, and the grasshoppers chirp among the mouldering stones, as if no sound of war had disturbed the spot since the world began. Man's ravage is transient as himself; and it would be difficult, even for one who has seen it, to people this quiet hillside with the fierce turmoil and hellish uproar of seventeen years ago. And yet, on the whole face of the earth, there are few spots more thoroughly impressive. How many threads of existence, widely separated through their whole course, were here united in death!—how many men, who never knew each other in life, came hither from the ends of the earth to look one another in the face, for one fierce short moment, under the deepening shadows of the grave! In that hot crush of battle, to how many on either side came the thought: "These are brave men, men whom we might have loved; but now it is too late for anything save to kill and be killed." And so they slew, and were slain; and on the spot where they fell, the gallant defenders have reared a pious tribute to their memory.* Far away in peaceful England, in some quiet woodland cottage wreathed with honeysuckle, or some quaint old farm-house with rook-haunted gable-ends, there hangs the rudely-painted likeness of some English lad who lies here beneath our feet. When they last saw him, how gallantly he stood up in all the pride of his new uniform and jauntily-slung knapsack, telling them, with a slight

* It is lamentable to be forced to add, that the monument is literally scarred from top to bottom with the names of English visitors.

tremor in his cheery voice, that he was going "to thrash them Rooshan blackguards," and would have some grand stories for them when he came back. And where is he now? Look down and read the inscription upon the monument: "To the memory of those who fell in the trenches and assaults upon the Redan, 1855." So should the epitaphs of all brave men be written. Many courtly phrases, many lines of sounding flattery, have been inscribed upon the tombs of famous soldiers which have not one tithe of the power and pathos of these few simple words. They contain a whole history in themselves—a history of cruel suffering and heroic endurance, of a grand and successful struggle against overwhelming odds—the tale told by the tumultus of Marathon, by the half-effaced ridges of Waterloo. On this spot, for eleven long months of stern trial, the fears, and hopes, and prayers, and agonised longings of a whole nation were concentrated. Around this quiet hillside, where the sheep feed peacefully in the declining sunshine, thousands of our best and bravest came cheerfully up to the long martyrdom which was only ended by death. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, these stout English hearts "endured hardness," as good soldiers of the great cause which sent them forth. "The greatest lesson of life," said Napoleon, "is to know how to die;" and that lesson, at least, those who lie here had learned as few men upon earth have ever done.

On the further shore of the great harbour, overlooking the smooth green slopes and rippling waters upon which the last gleam of the setting sun lingers lovingly, rises another monument, telling a tale equally mournful and equally heroic. Beneath the shadow of the huge pyramid that crowns the northern slope, lie the relics of the conquered army, watching even in death over the ruins of the fair city which they gave their lives to save. For these, too, sorrows a mighty nation. In Volhynian corn-lands and Moscovian forests, on the sandy plains of the Volga and the purple moors of the Don, the names of those who lie here are still remembered with sad and solemn triumph. "God and the Czar needed them, and they went"—went to death poured out upon them in a thousand forms, in the fierce short fever of battle, in the wasting agony of disease, in the grinding torment of famine, in the slow murder of frost. Never was a bad cause better defended. What could these brave, simple

souls know of political intrigues and imperial caprices, the ambition of a headstrong despot, or the rapacity of a corrupt administration? To the poor peasant-soldier only one thing was clear—that the darling “mother-land” was in danger, and that he must die to save her. And die he did, with a courage and constancy which many a famous historical martyr might have envied. Such a defeat as Sevastopol is well worth ten victories. To the conquerors it is but one more splendid example of native courage and endurance; to the conquered it is the opening of a new era, the fourth act in that great drama of which the first three were the reigns of Peter the Great, Catherine the Second, and Alexander the First. “The Crimean war,” said an eminent Russian critic to me the other day, “has been the salvation of our country; it first opened our eyes to our real condition, and set us to correct what we had thought perfect.” And well might he say so. It is often the case, that the dormant energies of a great nation are best aroused by a stunning blow from without. The *Allia*, *Furculæ Caudinae*, *Asculum*, were so many hard strokes to awaken the indomitable spirit of ancient Rome. The invasion of 1792 was a spur in the side of Republican France; the battle of Bull Run in that of Federal America. And thus, too, it may come to pass, that the civilised Russian of the twentieth century will look with an eye of forgiveness upon the crumbling hillocks, steeped in the best blood of Russia, which have been the grave of the old empire and the cradle of the new; the grave of the ancient régime, with all its lonely pride and useless magnificence—the cradle of a nobler and a wider supremacy, which speaks not through the thunder of cannon nor the fiat of headstrong despotism, and yet, throughout the whole earth, finds no language in which its voice is not heard.

GREEN LEAVES.

THE sweet leaves, the fresh leaves, the young green leaves,

The leaves in the sunshine growing;
Whilst the martin twitters beneath the eaves,
And the cowslip bells are blowing!

The dormouse awakes from his winter sleep,
And the black merle pipes on the cherry;
And the lily-buds, from their green sheath peep,
And maidens and men are merry.

With the fresh life-blood of the new-born spring
The elixir of love and pleasure;
When Hope on the threshold of Life takes wing
To search for its golden treasure.

O green leaves, O fresh leaves, O young green leaves,
When lovers in lanes are roaming,
Ye are dearer to youth, than the rich red sheaves,
That glow in the August gloaming!

For they tell with their glorious spikes of gold
Of a hope that has ripened to glory:
But green leaves whisper a hope untold,
And fond youth lists to the story!

THE OBSERVATIONS OF
MONSIEUR CHOSE.

I. MONSIEUR CHOSE'S LAST BITE.

“You have a bite, Monsieur Chose.”

Monsieur Chose had rested his rod upon the parapet of the quay; and was in conversation with Father Asticot.

A remarkable couple. Monsieur Chose was a barrel planted upon two lively little legs that paddled gallantly under their weight, a well-fed, perhaps over-fed, man, with an eye that twinkled merrily to the music of a corkscrew. His hands were so fat, it was with difficulty he put the bait upon his hook, and was often obliged to Father Asticot's fingers for helping him. Father Asticot was a tall lean man, with a ragged, drooping, grey moustache, a weary eye and wrinkled face; and his clothes proclaimed the fallen, needy man. His sabots clattered upon the quay, and the anglers turned to laugh at his thin shanks covered with blue patched trousers, and the green coat he had worn, his customers said, in their pleasant way, since he was a little boy.

“The pot-au-feu boils,” said Father Asticot, while he measured a handsome handful of lively bait to his old customer. “There are beauties for you. With that you will take fish as fast as you can pull them out. Yes, the saucepan boils, the scum is rising. They will come and take your rod out of your hands, perhaps the watch out of your pocket. They will empty your purse, you will find them between your sheets, and then your turn to sell these little beauties will come.”

While Father Asticot spoke he surveyed his lively store of bait, and turned it over, with the air of an artist who was satisfied with himself.

“Ah! Bah! old grumbler!” replied Monsieur Chose. “Let them come—your rascals. We shall not give them the trouble of going home again to their boozing kens. Ah! the rogues, they are coming to the top again, are they? They shall have no quarter this time.”

“You have a bite, Monsieur Chose,” cried his neighbour a second time.

Monsieur Chose rushed to his rod. Great excitement among the spectators. Every eye was fixed upon the float.

“I am quite sure you have not seen the Tattoo this morning,” Father Asticot said,

while he, with the rest, watched the sport of Monsieur Chose.

"A fig for the Tattoo," testily answered Monsieur Chose, his hands trembling with the excitement of the moment.

"It was a big one," calmly observed the neighbour, a retired captain, who had deserted Mars for minnows. The reader, it may be, has observed that when a fellow-sportsman calls your attention to a bite which you have lost, he assures you in a friendly way, that it must have been a big fish.

"It's this rascal Father Asticot, with his stories about the blackguards of his quarter, the Tattoo, and——"

Here the captain (Tonnerre, of the Zouaves of the Guard) rolled a terrible oath in his throat, and glared at the dealer in bait, who stepped up to the officer, and with an appealing look, opened his can of treasures. The soldier melted to the fisherman, and his weather-tanned face beamed. Was it in human nature to be hard upon the breeder of such gentles?

"But it is true, captain," Father Asticot took occasion to observe, apologetically. "It is quite true. They are boiling to the surface. They are sharpening their knives, and this time, they say, there shall be no mistake."

"There shall be none, old gossip," growled Captain Tonnerre, with a rattle of oaths that died away in his throat. "Meantime, give me a fresh bait, and let it be a beauty."

Father Asticot selected a prize gentle. "As fat as a retired bourgeois, as Camphre would say"—the old man spoke to himself—"and this is the proper way to serve him." The gentle writhed upon the hook. "That's what's coming; read the Tattoo, gentlemen, that's all. Don't blame me."

Monsieur Chose threw down his rod, and turned upon Asticot.

"Be off, old rascal that you are. You have driven the fish from my line. You bring us bad sport, with your stories of the fetid population of your quarter."

"Read the Tattoo, that is my answer—the Tattoo of this morning. It will make your flesh creep. I salute you, gentlemen." With a mock-heroic air that turned the laugh of the spectators upon Monsieur Chose and his neighbour, the old gentleman lifted his greasy cap, and made a profound bow to his customers.

The blouses who were in the crowd, hoping to see a minnow landed before they went on their way to the shop, or the grog-shop, were stirred to the exercise of their

grim humour by Father Asticot. Monsieur Chose was told to amuse himself while there was yet time, for he would be boiled down presently to grease the wheels of the triumphant car of the sovereign people. It was certainly not with what he caught that he had grown so fat. Was madame quite well? Then Captain Tonnerre (who was a little man) was taken in hand. He was the drum-major of the hundred and first regiment, the retired colonel of the Ambigu, General Boum out of an engagement.

"What can there be in the Tattoo to-day?" said Monsieur Chose to Captain Tonnerre. "The old man is right. The scum is stirring."

"We will skim it with our swords," Tonnerre answered, his face set, and oaths rattling in his throat, but his eye fixed steadily upon his float.

The talking and laughing became louder. Monsieur Chose turned for an instant, and defiantly faced the crowd. He was received with shouts of laughter, and a volley of witticisms of the coarsest and dirtiest sort. It was suggested that he should be cast in bronze at once, and presented to Monsieur Thiers. Captain Tonnerre was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Batignolles.

"It is ignoble!" the captain growled.

At this moment he had a bite, and landed his fish. The uproarious hilarity of the blouses covered the old soldier with shame, while he unhooked the smallest of minnows; and when, with a superb air of disdain, he cast his line back into the water, a universal shout of "Ah! glutton, would you empty the river?" was raised. Then there were speculations as to the sauce with which the general would eat his salmon. He was recommended to keep the tail half, and try it cold, with oil. "It's madame, the generale, who will be delighted!" piped a brazen gamin.

"What can there be in the Tattoo?" murmured Monsieur Chose. "Why, they're surrounding us, captain."

"Leave them to me," growled Tonnerre. "I will make very short work of them if they pass certain bounds."

They retreated when the captain wheeled sharply about from time to time; but pressed back towards the fishermen directly he turned his back upon them—laughing, joking, whistling, and singing more boisterously every time.

"Citizen fisherman," at length a leading gamin shouted, "command my services to carry home the friture. But you must

introduce me to the citoyenne, and we will have a fraternal banquet."

"Blackguard!" shouted Monsieur Chose, dropping his rod, and folding his fat arms with some difficulty. "I'll pull your ears all the way to the commissary of police. Blackguards all—be off!"

"Don't exasperate them," growled Tonnerre. "I have a bite."

"Exasperate them! The first who comes near me goes into the river."

"He's superb! He's statuesque! If there were only a photographer here. Don't stir, citizen. That's it, put on a severe air. Doesn't he look terrible? He's too fat for Hercules, but what a model for a tobacco jar!" A Paris crowd of blouses is a formidable body with the tongue.

"Leave them! Leave them, Monsieur Chose—you have a nibble," said the captain, suppressed rage giving a tremor to his voice.

"The fish may go to the devil!" replied Monsieur Chose, still facing the mocking crowd.

"He is making up his mind which he will eat! Ah, the ogre! Ah, the monster! But he doesn't look very fresh; suppose we wash him for dinner."

"Poltroons! Communards!" shouted Monsieur Chose, unable to control his anger.

The captain quietly laid his rod upon the ground, took the bait off his line, saying, "You have done it now, Monsieur Chose. That means war. Let it be so."

The crowd uttered a low general growl. Communards! There was no more play. The eyes of boys and men flashed fire. Two ringleaders tucked up their sleeves, muttering the word as a battle-cry, "Communards!"

Captain Tonnerre quietly put away his tackle—watching the tumult with one eye, and talking and swearing in his throat. Monsieur Chose stood firm, while the blouses yelled at him, approaching him with every shout; and the foremost blouse was within arm's length of his shoulder, when Father Asticot burst through the throng, and stood before his customers facing the readers of the *Tattoo*. The old man spoke to them as one having authority.

"Hands off! Detest the bourgeois, that is well; but respect the old man." With this Asticot solemnly lifted his cap. Then turning aside to Monsieur Chose and Captain Tonnerre, he whispered, "Get away as fast as you can."

The blouses, although touched by the father's appeal, were too deeply incensed

to be quieted with a word. Old men should behave like old men. The bourgeois had insulted the people, and he must offer an apology. The idea caused Monsieur Chose to shrug his shoulders as a mark of his supreme contempt. The movement was answered by a savage yell from the blouses; and it is not difficult to guess what the upshot of the difficulty would have been, had not Father Asticot, pointing to some kepis hastening towards them, said sternly:

"L'Autorité!"

"You were never in your life nearer becoming ground-bait," Captain Tonnerre observed to his fellow-sportsman when they had reached their café, and were enjoying the hour of absinthe.

Monsieur Chose had watched his last by the banks of the Seine.

Incited by the revelations of Father Asticot, and the demeanour of the blouses, he cast his line henceforth in waters much more troubled than those of the Seine, even when the floods are out.

II. TO PARIS IN SABOTS.

How blind are parents now-a-days! My brother Jules, for instance, has a strapping boy, just eighteen years of age; as strong as his father's shaft-horse; a rough country lad, who has had a fair education it is true, but who has not yet the force to make his way against the prejudices of the world. He is to come to Paris—to seek his fortune.

"Send him—in sabots," I wrote to his parent. "If you put him in leather, you are no father."

Madame Chose remonstrated with me, begging that I would not infuse bad ideas into the sound head of my brother, who was quietly making his fortune at Rennes; and, thank Heaven, had not yet taken to the unprofitable business of putting the world to rights.

"Since that unfortunate day," madame observed, "when you had an altercation with some blouses on the quay, and gave up the honourable pleasure of providing us with an occasional friture, you are a different man. You who have been content all your life with an occasional glance at the *Débats*, and a look at the *Gazette des Tribunaux* on Sundays or holidays, suddenly spend your money on the journalism of the *Gavroches*, and the gentlemen of Belleville and the barrières. You can't sleep at nights when there's an election on hundreds of leagues away; you who never took your nightcap off on the 4th of September. You caught that cold

which has lasted you half through the winter, hanging about the railway station to collect gossip from the deputies returning from Versailles. What have you to do with it all, Monsieur Chose? You have had work enough all your life: let them divide and subdivide; let them put themselves into committees and commissions of thirty, or a hundred and thirty if they like—what does it matter? They can't touch us; or if they could, your interference would not prevent them. Some day you'll mind what I say: burn all these disgusting papers, and ask me for your fishing-tackle again."

I have sometimes leaned towards my wife's way of thinking, saying to myself, "They can't take an egg out of my omelette, let the Assembly make a blunder every time it sits." But then I have reproached myself with the selfishness of this view, and recognised my duty as a citizen to educate myself for the proper discharge of my functions as a voter. I owe a duty also to my own flesh and blood. I am bound to afford my nephews and nieces, even my cousins in the third degree, the benefit of my study of the political drama that is playing under my nose. Minnow-fishing when the constitution hangs—nay, when three or four constitutions hang—in the balance, is the resource of an idiot.

Therefore, I repeat, I advised my brother to send his son to Paris—in sabots. And why? Because having seriously observed the times in which we live, I am persuaded that there is a golden ring in the clatter of sabots. People respect the wooden shoe. Out of the sabot, now-a-days, men step into bank parlours, enormous administrations, golden directorships, the Chamber of Deputies, nay, into presidential chairs. The world will have it so. To begin with, the lad who reaches Paris in sabots excites no envy; therefore he provokes no enemy to oppose him. Every little step he takes in the world redounds to his honour, and compels applause, provided he keeps the clogs in sight. A trifling slit or two in his garments will do him good service. The fewer sous he can show the better. When he becomes a great and affluent man, the world will comfort itself with the thought that time was when he had no stockings, and when his blue feet shook in the damp straw of his sabots. It is an offence to be prosperous without having been forlorn and superfluous; to have a high hand in the office you have not swept; to smoke an Havannah on the Boulevards

when you have never prospected for cigar ends. Before you are permitted to wear clean hands, you must be provided with substantial evidence of a time when they were as black as any ragman's. Society will no longer permit you to have been a comely bird, *ab ovo*.

This is the reason why so many of the great men who govern us to-day keep their sabots in their ante-chambers; go out to dinner with them; even show them in the tribune of the Assembly. In the East men remove their shoes to pass into the presence chamber; with us the wearer of the wooden shoe is a privileged person.

I gave Madame Chose two examples. She finds it difficult to keep her temper when I mention the name of old Asticot; but I imposed silence while I unfolded his touching story. He began life in dazzling shoes, and with full pockets. Richly fitted out, and fired with the generous enthusiasm of youth, he went with the expedition to Greece in 1828. In that noble cause he first figured in public life—but the result was dismal. Returned from Missolonghi he was reduced to give lessons in modern Greek to the studious youth of the time, whose name was not legion even in those days. He was a professor before he was thirty—poor devil!—professor of Greek, Greek history, Greek everything! His clothes got shabbier month after month; his class-room echoed with his solitary tread. And still he held to his chair, and loved his Greek. Beyond it the world did not exist for him. He lived on bread and grapes in the summer; on sausage and bread, and cabbage soup, in the winter. He was on his way to the sabots in which he should have started.

Weary with disappointment, he entered his class-room on a certain morning, and found a score of people in it. Was the golden dream taking tangible shape at length? The professor took his place, with a flutter at the heart; and while he disposed his books, still the new pupils came flocking in—in hot haste to sip at the beloved fountain. The room was packed; he would never be able to make his voice heard through the hubbub. But he began addressing himself to the people who were close to his desk. He had not uttered many words when the rattle of musketry was heard in the street. "Again!" was murmured all over the room. Poor Asticot!—it was one of the bloody days of June; and the crowd in his class-room had rushed in to get beyond the reach of the soldiers, who were firing at random.

He broke down after that, sinking gradually through the strata of poverty's ranks. He was tutor in poor schools—the new one always poorer than the last. His heart hardened with his bread. That rattle of musketry which dissipated the delicious dream of a moment made him what is called an enemy of society. He got away to those regions of Paris where the higher you climb the lower you get; to the Rue Mouffard, then Belleville, and thereabouts. They finished the old man; took all the Greek out of him; made of his little learning a very dangerous thing indeed; and at last reduced him to be a breeder of gentles—and riots—after having failed with old clothes and as a street messenger.

Now had Father Asticot brought his faculties to Paris in wooden shoes, with wisps of straw for socks, he would have ended in a palm-embroidered coat—a member of the Institute.

Madame Chose was not convinced, although I strengthened my instance with a hundred others, and showed her Rachel singing for sons before the Boulevard cafés, the beggar Jew founding a race of millionaires, the wine-shop keeper's son starting for a throne.

I tried her another way, unfolding my evening paper with an impressive gesture.

"To begin with!" she cried. "Don't quote the papers to me. One says the President ought to be worshipped on our knees; the other that he ought to be nearer Cayenne than Versailles; a third that he wears his head still only because these are milkop times. He is angel and rogue; genius and madcap; patriot and base egotist. Fold up your paper, Monsieur Chose. In our happy days, when you were amiable enough to remember that I had a little weakness for Seine gudgeon, as I have told you very often, you were quite content with the *Débats* and the *Gazette des Tribunaux*.

I was not to be beaten from my ground, for I felt that the future of my nephew depended on my firmness.

I remarked that the times were critical, and that they were bringing new men to the front, but nearly all—I stuck to this—in sabots.

I had an excellent instance at hand. There had been a storm in the Assembly between the party of the Sabots and the party of the Lorgnons. The Lorgnons and Sabots, these are the rival factions that send France to bed every night with a revolver under her pillow, and wake her to

wonder what the form of government may be before the sun goes down. The Sabots would have touched the noses of the Lorgnons on the occasion in question, in spite of the ringing of the President's bell, had not some few rational men stood between. Well, a well-intentioned Lorgnon—and this is my instance—rose on the morrow of the disturbance, to suggest a middle course, that would give a secure day after to-morrow to his countrymen.

He had no more chance of carrying his point than poor Asticot had of making his fortune by teaching Greek. He was a marquis, to begin with. He was young, and he drove a mail phaeton. He had come to Paris, in an express train, from the ancestral château. In all his life he had not earned the fraction of a red liard. He was sumptuously attired. The hands he raised in the declamatory passages of his harangue were white. His boots were of polished jet, and from his neck depended an eye-glass. Will any rational man tell me that this young nobleman had the least chance of making his way?

He spoke admirable sense in admirable French. He showed that he had studied well at college, and that he had mastered the public questions of his time. He recommended a fair, open, honourable, and liberal course. He was received with jeers by the triumphant Sabots, and covered with confounding epithets and jests. He was a Pitt in the bud. Where was his nurse? His big words and solemn warnings only reminded his enemies of a school-boy with a big pipe in his mouth. A big pipe! The Sabots are at home with this figure. Pipe-en-Bois is a prince among the Sabots, and the probability is that the audacious Lorgnon has never had a pipe between his lips in the whole course of his life. The pipe-and-beer policy is one of too robust a kind for the handling of the marquis. It is clear that he will never make way against the sturdy front of the Sabots. In any case he is too young. His words are those of wisdom and moderation; he has mastered the subject on which he is speaking; but where are his wrinkles; how much is he over fifty? There are dozens of people who proclaim his exceptional power, his application, his genius, his native eloquence. But will nobody falsify the registry of his birth, shake him out of his well-fitting clothes, soil his hands, shave his head, and lend him a pair of sabots? If not, he has no real friends.

He might have been tolerated on one condition, namely, that he had had an ap-

prenticeship to sedition to show, or a certificate of irreligion, or a diploma from some provincial school of revolt. But the wretched young man has never passed through the mud.

The marquis made an excellent speech, and his reward was a thrashing through the organs of the Sabots. Suppose he drops the Assembly, spurns the tribune, closes his books, and drives his mailphaeton off to the palaces of the painted ladies, and the clubs with convenient card-tables, and the turf where the heaviest bets are making, who will be the first to blame him and call down the scorn of the people upon him?—why, the Sabots, who yelled at him in the tribune.

"Therefore, madame, I observed, authoritatively, to my wife, who was still shaking her doubting head, "I shall write to Rennes, and advise Jules to send his boy to Paris in sabots. He is a likely lad, I hear, and I will not stand by and see his hopes destroyed by shoe-leather. Monsieur Thiers himself came humbly to the great city. Had the young Marseillais approached the capital in a drag, and with an escutcheon and liveries, do you think he would have been brought under the attention of the great Monsieur de Talleyrand, and have had an opportunity of wiping the nose of the young marquis (Monsieur de Talleyrand's grand-nephew), of whom I have been talking? Louis Feyron puts it very cleverly in the Figaro, madame."

"Don't talk to me about newspaper writers," answered Madame Chose. "I will not except even the Débats now-a-days; and—and—you haven't convinced me, Chose. Write as you please; I shall write to Madame Jules. The poor child's shoes will tell us who has the greater influence."

I could contain myself no longer, when my wife added:

"Better return to your gudgeon, my dear; there is nobody like Monsieur Chose to fish a friture."

I rushed off to my café and my club, for I had joined a club; but the mocking laugh of my wife sang in my head through two or three games of dominoes that evening.

WHAT IS A SUN?

THE more we learn about the Sun, the more does he puzzle us.

Our readers (who have hitherto been kept not ill supplied with solar news) will remember that something sensational may be expected from the next annual eclipse of the Sun, unless it should turn

out a private performance, hidden from the public by a curtain of clouds. The next couple of Transits of Venus, in the Decembers of 1874 and 1882 respectively,* are expected to tell us exactly how far off the Sun is, besides other interesting information. It is most desirable to improve that occasion, as no more transits of Venus will occur (they come in pairs, with intervals of eight years between them) until A.D. 2004 and 2012, when the present generation will care little about them. Meanwhile Monsieur Faye, the eminent French astronomer, has summarily given us the views most recently accepted respecting the physical constitution of the Sun. The problem is not of modern date. In all ages men have asked what can possibly be that splendid luminary which daily gives us heat and light, and how it is that he shines and warms us without being extinguished or even diminished in brightness.

Such still remains, in spite of incidental questions, the problem, "What is the nature of the Sun?" And more than that; through the progress of science and the discovery of instruments of unhopèd-for power, that problem is split up into a multitude of details. The invention of telescopes has led to the study of the very various phenomena observed on the Sun's surface—the spots, the "facules," the distribution of extra-brilliant matter in little patches resembling willow-leaves or grains of rice. We ask why are the spots ordinarily confined within a somewhat narrow equatorial zone; why they multiply, like many animalcules, by self-division, segmentation, fissiparous multiplication; why groups of spots are lengthened out in the direction of the Sun's parallels of latitude; why they are periodically reproduced, and what causes the superior brightness of the rice-grains and facules—which do exist, although Huyghens was unwilling to admit them. "As if," he said, "there could be, in the Sun, anything brighter than the Sun himself!"

We see, then, what a multitude of problems have arisen with increased means of observation. At present the study of the Sun constitutes a distinct branch of astronomy. It has special methods, instruments, and even observatories, as that of Wilna in Russia, Palermo in Sicily, and Kew in England. It has journals and a literature of its own. The astronomers who have devoted themselves to it feel

* See A Long Look Out, vol. xix. of ALL THE YEAR ROUND, First Series, p. 174.

sure that they are on the track of grand discoveries, invested with a double interest, for the study of the Sun is the study of the stars, which are nothing else but suns like ours. Moreover, the forces brought into play on the Sun must react more or less directly on us, and furnish the clue to many terrestrial phenomena which hitherto are unexplained.

The ancients believed the firmament to be formed of a fifth and purely sidereal element, essentially possessing light and heat. The peculiarity of the stars was to be exempt from all change. The dogma was held, and taught as incontrovertible, in all the schools of antiquity and the Middle Ages, until the invention of telescopes, in 1610, showed it to be completely erroneous.

Even then, spots in the Sun seemed to many an utter impossibility. Father Scheiner, one of the first to discover them, dared not publish the fact under his real name. "Bah!" said his Provincial, Father Budée, to whom he confided the astounding fact, "I have read my Aristotle over and over again, and he mentions nothing of the kind. Make your mind easy, my son. The only spots on the Sun are those thrown into your eyes by the glasses of your new-fangled instrument."

Those spots are too strange to be fully considered now. We can only touch on some of their most important bearings. For instance, the Periodicity of their occurrence, in quantity, on the surface of the Sun, opens a very fertile field of speculation. On more than one occasion, the early observers had fancied they remarked a greater frequency of sun-spots at regular intervals; and an astronomer of Dessau, Monsieur Schwabe, resolved to verify the conjecture. Day by day he regularly noted the number of spots on the solar disc; from year to year he found the number to vary with a certain regularity; first increasing, then reaching a maximum during which the Sun daily exhibited numerous spots, then decreasing to a well-marked minimum, to recommence afterwards exactly the same course. Monsieur Schwabe's diligence was rewarded at the end of twenty years, by the establishment, beyond doubt, of the periodicity of the solar spots, the interval between two epochs of minimum spottiness being fixed, approximately, at ten years.

With this fact ascertained, Professor Wolf, of Zurich, undertook the collection of all previous observation of spots, in order, by comparing them, to discover any traces of this remarkable periodicity which they

might reveal. He drew up a list, going as far back as 1611, thus bringing to light the march of the phenomenon during two whole centuries and a half. The period of solar spotting thence deduced is eleven years and a half, or thereabouts—although with notable anomalies. The reader will have the goodness to put this period side by side with the interval of twelve years, occurring for some time past between rainy seasons like that of '72-3, pointed out here in a recent paper.*

Most educated persons have read of, if they have not noticed with their own eyes, the Variable Stars—certain of the stars called fixed, whose brightness varies periodically in a most extraordinary and hitherto unaccountable manner. Now, the least reflection will show a striking analogy which the Sun presents in this respect, to those variable stars. For those stars are suns, and the Sun is a star. The well-known stars Mira Ceti, β (beta) of Perseus, β of the Lyre, and others, undergo equally regular periodical fluctuations of splendour. True, the changes they exhibit are both more rapid and more considerable in degree than the Sun's. In Mira Ceti, for instance, the variation extends from the third magnitude, if not to absolute extinction, at least to invisibility.

Even modern observers have not looked these facts in the face without a certain amount of unconscious repugnance. The idea that a star can flicker for awhile, like the last efforts of a lamp, before it goes out, shocks old and long-forgotten preconceptions whose roots still retain their hold on our minds. But the case is simple, if we only admit that the stars have not existed always; that they have had their period of formation, and that they will equally pass through their period of decline, followed by final extinction.

These phenomena doubtless embrace lengths of duration out of all proportion to those we are in the habit of considering; but if we cannot observe them in Time, we are able to study them in Space. Space presents us, simultaneously, with stars in every phase of stellar existence; exactly as a forest enables us, on the very same day, to follow the growth of the oak from the sprouted acorn to the stag-headed patriarch. Consequently, in our present state of knowledge, we cannot help regarding the Sun as a variable star whose period of variation is long, and whose variation itself is still slight in degree.

* The Forms of Water; Mist and Rain. Jan. 25, 1873.

The case must here be briefly stated. The Sun is a globe whose mean density is a little greater than that of water, but whose outermost strata are evidently gaseous. The surface of this globe exhibits on a ground comparatively dark, innumerable assemblages of solid or liquid incandescent particles, forming distinct and separate clouds (the willow-leaves or rice-grains) of remarkably similar structure and size. Such is the Photosphere—the exterior luminous shell which contains the globe or mass of the Sun itself. This globe, perfectly spherical, turns on an invariable axis with a movement of rotation very different from ours and that of the planets of our system. On its surface there appear from time to time black spots which, at first sight, appear to be simple gaps or rents in the network of incandescent clouds. Those spots are pure accidents, whose nature we refrain from considering at present.

Evidently, the force and constancy of the solar radiation are connected with the brilliant rice-grains of the photosphere. Now, these incandescent clouds cannot last for ever—cannot eternally emit light and heat with the same formidable intensity. They must have some mode of incessant renovation. It is their formation and reproduction, therefore, which constitute the clue to the mystery. Their office must be to bring regularly to the surface the heat of the interior mass; without which, the photosphere, exhausted by its radiation into space, would soon die out. Moreover, the movements occasioned by the perpetual renewal of the photosphere, ought to modify the natural rotation of the globe, and to confer on it the special character which has just been mentioned.

Suppose this globe to contain, amongst other gases, a certain proportion of oxygen and of the metals of lime and magnesia in a state of vapour. In that condition, the mass, possessing but a feeble power of radiation, would be far from having the aspect of a sun. But when, rising to the surface, the gases reached a lower temperature, where the combination of the oxygen with the metallic vapours became possible—at that moment, clouds of white-hot dust would suddenly appear on the surface of the globe, incomparably more bright in splendour than the previous radiation had been. The photosphere would be spontaneously formed by the lowering of temperature at the surface of the Sun.

But the solid particles, the result of the

combination, will immediately fall towards the centre of the globe. In their fall, by passing through hotter strata, they will regain some of the heat lost by radiation outside, until they reach a point where the central furnace, destroying the combination, again sets the oxygen at liberty and disengages the metal in a state of vapour. This development and transformation will necessarily force a corresponding quantity of vapours upwards. These latter, undergoing a similar change, will reproduce the same phenomena. Under the influence of the lower outside temperature, they will combine as before, producing a fresh swarm of molecules of white-hot magnesia or lime.

Such is the mechanism to which Monsieur Faye attributes the ceaseless renewal of the photosphere. From every point of the brilliant surface there falls, towards the centre, a shower of solid or liquid particles which have radiated for awhile upon that surface, in the form of incandescent clouds. In the central strata, into which the shower falls, it is again transformed into vapour, thus forcing innumerable gaseous currents to mount vertically till they reach the photosphere, where they replace their predecessors in fulfilling the function of distributing light and heat throughout our system. And if the mass of the Sun, instead of being trifling, is actually enormous, do we not see that the play of ascending and descending currents will incessantly continue its regular action, so long as the gradually lowered temperature (not of the surface only but of the entire mass) shall not have contracted the interior strata sufficiently to make them offer resistance to these movements?

This apparent contradiction of opposite currents, upwards and downwards, invariably and incessantly following the direction of the radii of a gaseous sphere—one set consisting of ascending vapours, the other set of strings of falling liquid or solid drops—is not without analogy in nature. It occurs on earth every day, constituting the mechanism which affects the aerial circulation of our waters, furnishes the world with its envelope of clouds, and supplies the rain which fertilises our soil. Only, to make the assimilation complete, we must go back to the ancient days when the earth's crust was still hot, and the rain was reconverted into steam as soon as it touched the burning surface. Moreover, our liquid rain rarely falls on the spots whence its parent vapours originated, but is carried by the winds to other regions;

whereas, as the Sun has no true atmosphere, his white-hot metallic rain falls almost entirely in the same locality (if we may apply such a word to the fiery cloud-land) which gave it birth.

The Earth, we may say, has a Nephelosphere, or shell of clouds, fed by ascending currents of vapour, and supplying liquid descending currents. The Sun has a Photosphere, formed by analogous processes.

Such is Monsieur Faye's answer to Mr. Carrington's question, "What is a sun?" A sun is an excessively hot mass formed of permanent gases, and especially of vapours susceptible of condensation, animated also by a rotatory motion. Suspend this sphere, only moderately luminous, in space, and as soon as the external stratum has sufficiently cooled, it will put forth a dazzling photosphere, alimanted by a system of ascending and descending currents. And the phenomenon will continue with sustained intensity, until the progressive contraction of the entire mass shall have stopped the currents and suppressed the photosphere.

The superiority of this theory to its predecessors consists principally in its accounting for both the energy and the constancy of the solar radiation. A liquid sun would soon be covered with a crust. Sir William Herschell's sun, the sun accepted for the last twenty or thirty years, with a luminous envelope and a solid kernel, would not suffice a single day for its enormous expenditure by radiation. And as there are millions of similar stars in the heavens, we may believe that such beautiful phenomena depend on the simplest and most general laws of nature, and not on any artifice or trick like those which our poor imagination suggests.

Both the Intensity and the Constancy of the Solar Radiation call for the inquirer's special attention. The Intensity was measured by Monsieur Pouillet, in 1838, by means of a very simple apparatus. The result was that, allowing for absorption of heat by our atmosphere, the Sun's heat normally received on a square metre (something more than a yard), at the distance of the Earth from the Sun, would suffice to boil a litre (say a quart) of water in less than six minutes. This result led several engineers—Ericsson, for instance—to speculate on the employment of the solar heat as a motive power. But suppose the square metre advanced to the actual surface of the Sun, it is demonstrated by calculation that the radiation received there,

per second, by each square metre, represents, converted into force, the power of seventy-seven thousand horses. The total radiation from the Sun per second is easily obtained by remembering that the Sun's surface is twelve thousand times that of the Earth, that the Earth's surface contains five hundred and ten millions of millions of square metres. Such is the overwhelming amount of energy which the solar radiation every instant shoots forth, pours, and disperses into space.

The Constancy of the radiation now claims our attention.

We may affirm, speaking generally, that the temperature of the Earth (which depends almost exclusively on the solar radiation, in consequence of the slight conducting power of the terrestrial crust) has not undergone any notable change since the most remote geological ages. In fact, except at the very beginning, the Earth has always been covered by vegetables and inhabited by animals, more or less highly organised.

Now, in the immense scale of temperatures which comprise all possible phenomena, vegetable and animal life are restricted within the narrow interval of a few degrees. The solar radiation, therefore, cannot have varied, since the most remote geological ages—that is, for millions of years—beyond the trifling quantity comprised between those limits. The more recent historical period helps us to still more precise results. Learned botanists, who have studied the present geographical distribution of the most delicate plants at the extreme range of their actual habitat, assure us that the mean temperature of several determinate regions of the globe cannot have sensibly varied for the last two or three thousand years.

These notions, a partial summary of Monsieur Faye's learned and lengthy essay, *Sur la Constitution Physique du Soleil*, would make the Sun a consequence of the original nebulous phase which Laplace takes as the starting-point of his history of the solar system. But they also foreshadow the Sun's progress up to final extinction—as far as shining is concerned—of which sundry lost stars, the planets, and the terrestrial globe, are instances. Such would be the complete evolution of the immense masses of matter, which little by little dissipate their energies in space, by their radiation of light and heat.

This theory propounds, not as near, but as inevitable, the end of the blazing Sun

himself, who, after steadily shining for incalculable ages, will finally cease to light and warm us—will, in short, go out. When the internal circulation which feeds the photosphere and regulates its radiation shall first slacken and eventually stop, animal and vegetable life (which for some time past will have crowded and been restricted to the neighbourhood of the equator), will entirely disappear from off the globe. Reduced to the feeble radiation from the stars, the earth will be wrapped in the chill and the twilight of interstellar space. The continual movements of the atmosphere will give place to absolute calm. From the last clouds, the last showers will have fallen. The brooks and rivers will conduct no longer to the sea the waters which, continually, were again drawn from it by solar radiation. The ocean itself, frozen into a solid mass, will refuse to obey the laws of the tides. The only light of her own the Earth will enjoy, will proceed from shooting stars, still continuing to enter and take fire in our atmosphere.

Perhaps, the alternations observed in stars at the commencement of their decline, will occur in the Sun. Perhaps the development of heat occasioned by some falling-in of the solar mass, will cause him to flare up, for a brief interval, with an outburst of his ancient splendour; but he will soon grow once more dark and dim—like the famous stars of the Swan, the Serpentarius, and, still more recently, the Crown. The rest of our little system, planets and comets, will share the Earth's lot, continuing, nevertheless, to revolve, with her, in the dark, round the extinguished Sun. Only, the Sun having lost his repulsive force, the comets will also have lost their tails.

Such—for him who sees in the Universe brute force and matter only—such is the destiny which awaits us; a possible new heavens and a new earth; that earth perhaps the Sun, revolving as a planet round some still non-existent sun: a conclusion certainly less cheerful, although perhaps more logical than the theory of the incorruptibility and unchangeability of the starry firmament.

But if, shrinking back from this ghastly perspective, we revert to the actual condition of the Earth, so marvellously vivified by the Sun, we cannot sufficiently admire the harmonious simplicity of the means which the Great Author of all things has brought into play, to produce around us, as Kepler said, movement and life, order

and beauty. And He who has gifted us now with movement and life, order and beauty, will be able to reproduce them at His will.

NOTES OR GOLD?

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "FATAL ZERO," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XL. SUSPENSE.

It will have been noticed what a singular change has come over the band of persons who are now engaged in hunting down poor Doughty and his treasure, and who, when seen at the little musical party with which this story began, were a group of ladies and gentlemen of the average kind, harmless and indifferent, and in some degree good-natured. By a gradual descent we now find these decent persons with eager, jealous eyes, hungering after gold, all engaged in this excited and unscrupulous pursuit, and ready to go to almost any lengths in the ardour of their unholy greed. Their strained and restless eyes watched each other with a jealous fury. They were all restless, perpetually going out into the streets with no defined view, or hovering near the premises where this expected treasure was, occasionally encountering each other very awkwardly, and each making off with a guilty air, as though they had only accidentally been passing that way.

Thus Will Gardiner would hardly have been recognised by any former friend who had known him as a hearty, boisterous, welcome-giving fellow, that seized on people violently, and carried them home to dinner to be deafened by his boisterous laughter. The affectionate father, who wearied people with praises of his girl, the tolerant husband, the good-natured friend—all were gone. In their place there was now a silent and restless being, inclined to be captious and even quarrelsome, while in his eyes was to be read an unholy eagerness and expectancy. It was unfortunate, too, that at this time should have come pressure from debts, in which his lavish hospitality had involved him. It was noticed that Parkinson, the manager of the West of England Branch Bank at Brickford, was a frequent guest at the Will Gardiner dinners, and that often Will Gardiner broke out into the loudest and most boisterous praise of this gentleman's manners and heart. He was one of the best fellows breathing, a real honest, down-

right, straightforward, English man of business. And it was not unreasonable to assume that these enthusiastic spasms followed close on some indulgent "renewal" which had been transacted that day at the bank. Yet in these latter days it was remarked that Will Gardiner, going about moody and dark-browed, had relaxed in his praises, and on one or two occasions had burst out into angry condemnation of his admired friend and of his system. He was ruining the bank. It was a wonder that the other banks had not enterprise enough to start a new branch. There was plenty of room. The griping and scraping system was old-fashioned, and if some new concern were started on a really liberal system they would take the wind out of the sails of the present establishment. In short, it had long been suspected that Will Gardiner had been going too fast, and in a place like Brickford suspicion was knowledge, and knowledge was next to certainty. His lady, too, the agreeable, managing Mrs. Gardiner, showed symptoms of the same ugly influence. Her face had grown pinched, her voice more tart, and she dealt forth her customary ill-natured speeches with more than usual sharpness of barb. Between her and the good-natured, complacent husband, unusual scenes of altercation and reproach took place. But there was an agreement in one point that "something must be done," and that very quickly, or the card house in which they were living would come toppling down about their ears.

Of Lady Duke's condition we have already spoken. She herself was pressed and harassed a good deal by the same forces. But with people of fashion, and "of a certain position," and who have some sort of an estate, the billows of pecuniary distress are slow in rising, and may beat for years against the stone breakwater without serious damage. It is very different with the professional man in the rising town, who is living "in a good style," which too often signifies "beyond his means." There a catastrophe often comes with appalling rapidity. Lady Duke had therefore a good deal of breathing time before her. But on the other hand she felt that unless she acted promptly and speedily, her competitors would be beforehand with her.

Finally, there was Doctor Spooner. He was a mere adventurer without a shilling, but hoping to "get on." All, therefore, who were engaged in this rather exciting

contest were pretty much upon a level as regards the pressure that was urging them on to speedy action. Lady Duke felt, then, that she must lead if they were to win at all. The Gardiners had the same impression too, and were constrained to admit that, without her they would have no *locus standi*; but Will was too proud to enter into a direct alliance with her. Indeed, Mrs. Gardiner was so defiant and so confident in her own talents that she felt quite disinclined to share the spoils of victory. She had bitter suspicions of Lady Duke, and believed that her "game" was to secure the whole for herself, taking possession of the unhappy Doughty, and stripping him of everything, whether he were dead or alive, sane or mad. They were more nearly related to the patient than were the Dukes, and Mr. Gardiner's position as a barrister and judge, seemed to mark him out as the suitable person to have charge of the matter.

The husband and wife had many strange conferences on this head, he hanging back with a not unnatural scrupulousness, the lady urging him forward with arguments and taunts, somewhat after the model of those used by Lady Macbeth on a more formidable occasion. What was he afraid of; was it not only their duty after all? Rather, would he not do well to be afraid of the terrible pressure of the invasion of creditors whose proceedings he was now staving off with such difficulty, and who would presently, no doubt, resort to extreme measures. This appeal never failed with Will Gardiner, and his next question was to ask what they were to do.

Mrs. Gardiner had the whole mapped out clearly, and gave her programme in the sharpest and most distinct manner. They must be bold, fearless, and act entirely for themselves. There must be no throwing in their lot with any one else, and no compromising or weak delicacy. The only way was to strike boldly—take up a line of open hostility, force themselves in, and let the citadel fall to the strongest. They were the strongest. He was a man—a barrister—a person of position—opposed to whom were feeble women, and creatures like Nagle and Spooner. There was, of course, the chief difficulty, which was the patient himself; but with him, the same course must be pursued, a summary assault and capture, with a firm holding of the ground.

These suggestions were artfully pressed, not all at once, but on various occasions,

and at many a nightly council. Still he resisted.

"I don't like this work," he said; "it's dirty work, and I am ashamed of myself at the very idea."

"At what?" would say his wife, impatiently. "We are doing no more than what is always done in these cases. It is most painful and disagreeable, but that can't be helped. You must strike boldly and bear down all opposition with a high hand; or else be borne down yourself. You must think of your wife and children. Should it not of right come to us? I have no patience with the selfish, greedy old fellow whining over his loves, and neglecting his real relations who have a claim on him!"

This rough-and-ready way of putting the matter made due impression on Will Gardiner, who felt there was a certain cruel logic at the bottom of it—the logic that something must be done, and done very speedily. Even as he looked at the handsome furniture, the most substantial and tasteful in Brickford, another argument was addressed to him; for the ugly claws of an odious and spectral octopus seemed to be sprawling over it, holding the cabinets, mirrors, couches, &c., in a fast clutch. This octopus was a BILL OF SALE which some time before he had been obliged to give to that Mr. Parkinson, the manager of the bank, in return for certain necessary advances, and in reference to which he had been receiving many necessary reminders.

"After all," he said to himself, "if we do not do something he will fall into the fangs of that harpy Duke, who would not mind killing the poor fellow, so that she got hold of the spoil." This charitable view determined him, and he made up his mind to act.

CHAPTER XL. THE BIRKENSHAWES.

LADY DUKE had also made up her mind to act, and did not lose a moment in carrying out her plans. She had written to her husband to come down at once, believing that his presence with the "K.C.B." adornments, his military, almost magisterial presence, would lend a weight to the proceedings. He had already arrived, though his presence was not known to the town of Brickford. She was careful not to tell him more of her proposed business than that it was a most painful matter, and that they were compelled to interfere in the interests of the poor victim himself,

who would otherwise become the prey of a gang of designing persons. For Sir George Duke, notoriously subservient as he was to his lady's behests, was a gentleman of strict honour, who would not engage himself in any "dirty" business of the kind for all the wealth of the world. It was presented to him, therefore, as a sort of Samaritan office, which would of course be for the interest of the family, though this was merely incidental.

Mr. Birkenshaw, as we have seen, was a solicitor, and a new solicitor, who, like so many other professional gentlemen, had come to settle in Brickford. He was a hard-faced young man, and was known to be poor and struggling. It was, however, admitted that he came of a tolerably good family, but had "disgraced himself" in the eyes of the community by running off with a shopkeeper's daughter, whom he believed to have plenty of money in her own right; but who proved to be "in the power of her father," as the phrase runs. This disastrous mistake was fatal to his prospects at Brickford, for the community could not pass over the double failure. Had he secured the fortune, his success would have gone a good way towards condoning the low character of the alliance. The girl, who expected to "be made a lady of," was deeply mortified at this neglect, which no less affected her husband. He was indeed disgusted with the place, and thinking of setting out for Australia, or some colony where there would be an opening for his talents, and where there are no such baleful impediments to a man's success, when he was sent for to draw Mr. Doughty's will. This seemed like the breaking of the clouds. Very astute and far-seeing, he at once took in the whole situation at a glance; the opposing interests, the contention of the various parties, and the bitter struggle that was going on round the sick man's bed. Here was a case which he had often longed for as giving a scope to his talents which no humdrum professional business would offer in a twelve-month. Doctor Spooner had led him to believe that it was by his interest that he had been introduced, but he very soon discovered from Mr. Doughty that he owed his introduction to that gentleman himself. Mr. Doughty was likely to be interested by the hardship of the case, and the disqualification which the intolerant of Brickford so unfairly laid upon a struggling man. The solicitor, therefore, resented the pretence of patronage which had been put

forward, and felt himself discharged from all obligation of supporting his introducer.

The shopkeeper's daughter was pining in a sort of discontent, bitterly disappointed at her exclusion from the high society of Brickford, which she had made sure of entering. She heard of all the entertainments that were going on, and looked wistfully from afar off in despair at her exclusion. Her husband, too, who felt that he had been dragged down from his former position, was bitterly aggrieved by this neglect, and eager to be revenged on the Brickfordians for their slights. She gave her husband many weary hours owing to her complaints and repinings at this treatment, and was never weary making attempts of a secret and roundabout character to acquire "her proper position in society." But the ladies of Brickford were resolute, and indeed took a pride in keeping this person in her proper place.

Mr. Birkenshaw was in his office waiting for clients, who, when they did present themselves, were of a needy class. He was for the hundredth time execrating the miserable opportunities the place offered to a man of his genius, when he saw, through the blind, a carriage drive up to the door. Here, at last, was an opportunity; from the window above, his wife had also seen the arrival, and hailed it with a pleased flutter. She knew it was Lady Duke's carriage, and saw that personage descend in all her state. She could not hope that this visit had anything to do with recognition of herself; but still it might be the beginning of some relation, and she watched nervously.

Mr. Birkenshaw received his visitor with all respect. She had come on a matter of business, and to ask Mr. Birkenshaw's professional aid. Her son had run up some bills at Brickford, and the tradesman had made some extortionate charges. There were besides a dealing or two with some money-lenders, which might have been in regular course; but she felt herself—a poor woman—wholly unfitted to deal with them. Would Mr. Birkenshaw see these people and make some sort of arrangement?

This was really the state of affairs, but hitherto she had not been specially anxious to accommodate these creditors, who, she considered, should wait like other people. It was Alfred's own affair, and if he chose to run in debt he must deal with his creditors himself, and settle with them as best he could.

Mr. Birkenshaw would be delighted to undertake the task. After business details had been despatched, Lady Duke gave utterance to these memorable and delightful words:

"I have been very remiss in calling on Mrs. Birkenshaw; but that is a pleasure I have long intended. Perhaps," this with a gracious courtesy, "I might be so fortunate as to find her at home now?"

The solicitor's face flushed with pleasure, he leaped up and begged she would excuse him for a moment; then flew up-stairs with the welcome news to his wife, giving her warning to prepare a hasty toilet in honour of the event. Right joyfully and speedily did she set about the task, and in a few moments he was ushering up the great lady into the modest drawing-room.

Lady Duke, as we have seen, was a woman of the world, and knew how to avoid being patronising when she meant to be gracious. She was most agreeable, hinted at her own private influence in Brickford, and said there were numbers of her friends who would be delighted to know Mrs. Birkenshaw. Then she turned the conversation on the prevailing topic of the moment. This was adroit; for she had taken care not to make a single allusion to the matter—in the office. Business in the drawing-room loses the official air of business.

"It is a most unhappy state of things," she said, "and his state is growing really pitiable. Fancy a poor helpless creature left as prey to adventurers, who only want to despoil him of all he has."

"Oh, it is dreadful! shocking!" said the lady, who from henceforth was to agree with every sentiment of her august visitor.

"Yes," said her husband. "And they seem to have succeeded. For it is no secret in this place how he has disposed of his vast wealth. I prepared his will, and have been told by every one I met his exact disposition. It is no use my preserving any professional reserve in the matter."

"But you have heard what has happened since? That will no longer exist."

Mr. Birkenshaw coloured a little, as though this had been some slight to his handiwork.

"No longer exists? What has he done?"

"It is said," said Lady Duke, stooping forward, and speaking in a low, earnest

voice, "that in some paroxysm of fury, or paroxysm of some kind—this is the story—that he fell upon the paper, and tore it into fragments. Latterly, certainly, he has grown very strange."

"This is curious news. I was expecting every day to hear from him, and have the deed executed regularly," said the solicitor, with some vexation, for he had intended working the case up into a substantial and satisfactory job. "He was certainly sensible and rational enough when giving me his instructions; but this sudden proceeding certainly seems strange. Then he has thrown over the Nagles?"

"Completely. But there is a more extraordinary story still, which I think I ought to tell you; but I shall do so down stairs in your sanctum. For this is meant as a visit to Mrs. Birkenshaw," added she, bowing sweetly, "and we must not be talking business in her drawing-room."

Immensely gratified at this compliment, the solicitor's wife could only smile and bow, and was so delighted that she did not perceive that her august visitor confined herself to the compliment, and promptly rose to go down to the office for the business matters she had alluded to. Lady Duke was at once on the most confidential terms with the lawyer.

"Should not something be done in the matter?" she said. "It is getting very serious. There can be no doubt—if what we heard be true—that he has taken up some strange delusions. I think it must be a sort of misapprehension, but it is stated on excellent and undoubted authority, that he has declared that he will found an hospital for cats and dogs. Of course this is exaggerated. But he should be seen by proper medical authority, who should pronounce on his state."

Mr. Birkenshaw was growing interested, and made the very remark that she was inviting.

"But his nearest relations should look after him. He should not be left a prey to these Spooners and Nagles. You know who are the most nearly connected with him, of course."

"Oh, we are, beyond question," said she; "but you see there is a great delicacy in taking any step. I have tried, I frankly

confess, to give him advice—to make my way in; but really there have been such scenes—such indecent scenes—what with putting obstacles in the way, and almost barricading the door, that no lady could expose herself to——"

All at once the lawyer saw the situation. Up to that moment he had been, as it were, dazzled by the surprise of the visit, and the anticipated pleasure to be found in the new acquaintance. Lady Duke had, besides, led up to the matter in such a natural way that he had not perceived the nature of the business that had really brought her. Now it was all revealed, and Lady Duke saw by his face, with some awkwardness, that he understood.

"Do you wish me to act for you, to advise you, to assist you?" he said, bluntly and coldly, for he was amazed to discover the motive of Lady Duke's attention to his wife. "Do you want to assert your place beside the patient, and take the whole control?"

"Oh, dear no!" said Lady Duke, confused. "I spoke merely out of humanity. I should not like to see a poor helpless being made a victim of——"

"Except by those who are properly entitled to do it, I mean," he added, hastily; "protected by those who have the right to protect him. You think that you have the right; the Gardiners that they have as strong a right. The Nagles have pronounced ideas on the same subject. In short, it is a task that requires boldness and tact, and the satisfaction of saving this poor being from being the prey of harpies is likely to be won only by those who show skill and tact. Suppose," continued Mr. Birkenshaw, rising, "we go into my confidential room, and consider this matter more in detail."

After a short pause Lady Duke followed him into the confidential room, where they remained more than half an hour. What was arranged there was not known even to the wife of Mr. Birkenshaw's bosom, but it was something more important than arrangements for future visitings and agreeable intimacy.

NOTICE.—The third of the series of articles, "Famous British Regiments," will appear next week.

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